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THE THEOREM OF FORENSIC ABSOLUTION

A Framework for Eliminating Non-Productive Recursive Self-Evaluation in Modular Cognitive Systems

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Author: Jesse Haskin, DodecaGone Systems

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ABSTRACT

This document presents a formal model for identifying and eliminating shame as a non-productive variable in executive function systems. The framework defines shame not as a moral condition but as a measurable computational overhead that consumes processing resources without contributing to error correction or system improvement. A four-step remediation protocol is provided, along with explicit integration with the Sanding Scale cognitive friction metric.

1. DEFINITIONS

The following variables are used throughout this framework:

sigma (Shame): The persistence of error-related data in the active processing buffer **after the forensic cost (C_forensic) has been fully paid** — that is, after the root cause has been identified and the corrective action determined. Shame is defined as recursive re-processing of failure data that produces no new corrective information. It is distinguished from productive error analysis by a termination condition: if the operator can state the trigger, the escalation path, and the corrective action, all usable data has been extracted. Continued processing after this point is sigma.

psi (Symmetry): The degree of alignment between intended action and actual system output, measured on a scale of 0.0 to 1.0, where 1.0 represents complete alignment.

omega (Bandwidth): The total available cognitive processing capacity at any given time.

omega_effective (Effective Bandwidth): The portion of total bandwidth available for productive work after overhead costs are subtracted.

C_forensic (Forensic Cost): The computational cost of identifying the root cause of an error and determining the appropriate corrective action. This cost is necessary and productive. C_forensic is considered complete when three conditions are met: (1) the trigger event is identified, (2) the escalation pathway is traced, and (3) a corrective action is determined. These constitute the termination condition for productive error analysis.

delta (Information Friction): The resistance encountered during information processing. Higher friction correlates with reduced throughput and increased error rates.

S (Sanding Level): The current cognitive friction state as measured on the Sanding Scale (0.0–12+). This variable constrains the applicability of the remediation protocol, as executive function capacity degrades at higher S values.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In standard cognitive and executive function models, failure events produce feedback data. A portion of this feedback is productive: it identifies what went wrong and how to correct it. This is the forensic cost (C_forensic) and it is a necessary expenditure.

However, a secondary process frequently activates alongside forensic correction: recursive self-evaluation that re-processes the failure event without generating new corrective data. This process is defined as shame (sigma).

The central observation is that sigma consumes omega (processing bandwidth) while contributing zero improvement to psi (system alignment). It is overhead without output.

This is consistent with the Hardware Axiom: when Intent does not equal Output, the hardware is misaligned — the operator is not malformed. Shame treats the discrepancy as evidence of operator deficiency. The theorem treats it as a calibration event.

3. THE THEOREM

Effective bandwidth is modeled as:

omega_effective = omega - C_forensic - sigma

The relationship between shame and system alignment is derived as follows:

(a) C_forensic captures all usable information from the failure event. The termination condition is met when the operator can articulate the trigger, the escalation path, and the corrective action. After this point, no additional corrective data remains to be extracted.

(b) Sigma re-processes the same failure data after the termination condition has been met. By definition, this processing produces no new corrective output.

(c) Because sigma consumes omega without improving psi, any increase in sigma directly reduces omega_effective:

d(omega_effective) / d(sigma) = -1

(d) Reduced omega_effective reduces the system's capacity to perform productive work, including future error correction. Therefore system alignment degrades:

d(psi) / d(sigma) < 0

(e) Additionally, sigma produces narrative elaboration (emotional weight, identity-level attribution, catastrophic extrapolation) that increases information friction (delta) without improving error correction. This compounds the bandwidth loss with processing degradation.

The chain is therefore: sigma increases → omega_effective decreases → delta increases → psi decreases. No link in this chain produces corrective output.

Therefore, the optimal value of sigma is zero.

4. SANDING SCALE INTERACTION

The remediation protocol (Section 5) requires executive function capacity to perform. Specifically, it requires the ability to isolate events, distinguish hardware behavior from operator intent, and make rational archival decisions. These capabilities degrade as Sanding level increases.

At S ≥ 6.0, prefrontal cortex function is measurably impaired (reduced HRV, sympathetic dominance, alpha suppression). Attempting the Flush Protocol at this level may produce additional sigma rather than reducing it, as the operator lacks the cognitive resources to distinguish forensic cost from shame processing.

The remediation protocol should be performed at S ≤ 4.0. The protocol is a post-crisis tool, not a crisis intervention tool. During active crisis (S ≥ 6.0), the appropriate response is the crisis protocol defined in the Sanding Scale framework (YOU ARE HERE), not the Flush Protocol.

This constraint is itself a protection against shame: if the operator attempts to "process" a failure event while still in crisis, the likely result is deeper entrenchment of sigma rather than elimination. The instruction to wait is not avoidance. It is triage.

5. THE REMEDIATION PROTOCOL

The state where sigma equals zero is defined as **functional innocence**. This is not a moral claim. It is a processing state in which all available bandwidth is allocated to either productive work or legitimate forensic correction, with no resources allocated to recursive non-productive self-evaluation.

The protocol for achieving this state (to be performed at S ≤ 4.0):

Step 1 — ISOLATE
Identify the specific failure event. Separate it from adjacent events, prior failures, and identity-level narratives. Contain it to a single bounded incident with defined edges: what happened, when, and what triggered it.

Step 2 — STRIP
Remove emotional and narrative weight from the failure data. Retain only the factual sequence: what was attempted, what occurred, what the delta was between intended and actual outcome. Critically: separate what the operator did from what the hardware did. If operating above S 6.0, prefrontal cortex was compromised — decisions made in that state were made by impaired hardware, not by the full operator.

Step 3 — ARCHIVE
Store the corrective information (root cause, contributing factors, recommended adjustments) for future reference and calibration. Verify the termination condition: can the operator state the trigger, the escalation path, and the corrective action? If yes, C_forensic is complete. The archived data is now an asset, not a liability.

Step 4 — FLUSH
Release the failure event from the active processing buffer. The corrective data has been archived. The remaining emotional and narrative content serves no further function and may be discarded. This is not suppression — the data was fully processed and the useful portion retained. The remainder is waste heat.

This process improves with practice. Initial applications may require hours. With repetition, the cycle compresses to minutes. The operator is training the system to process error logs rather than run shame loops. That is a skill.

6. IMPLICATIONS

When failure is treated as system noise rather than identity evidence, two outcomes follow:

(a) The operator's self-model is decoupled from their error rate. Errors become data points rather than character assessments. This is the practical application of the Hardware Axiom: Intent ≠ Output implies hardware misalignment, not operator malformation.

(b) Continuous improvement becomes sustainable because the drag coefficient of accumulated regret is eliminated. Each improvement cycle begins from current state rather than from a deficit position.

This enables asymptotic improvement: a system that continuously refines its performance without the compounding overhead of recursive shame processing.

7. APPLICABILITY

This framework was developed for use in neurodivergent cognitive architectures where recursive self-evaluation is a known failure mode, particularly in systems characterized by ADHD, Bipolar I, and ASD comorbidity. These architectures exhibit elevated baseline cognitive friction (higher resting Sanding levels), reduced thermal budget for error processing, and a pronounced tendency toward identity-level attribution of system errors.

The framework is also applicable to neurotypical cognitive systems experiencing acute or chronic shame processing, including but not limited to: post-crisis shame spirals, perfectionism-driven recursive evaluation, grief-related self-blame, and trauma-associated identity narratives.

The framework integrates with the Sanding Scale (a 0–12+ cognitive friction metric) and the Flush Protocol (the operational implementation of the remediation protocol described in Section 5), both developed as part of the DodecaGone Systems framework and documented in YOU ARE HERE: Keep Existing.

PRIOR ART NOTICE

This framework was originally composed on January 20, 2026 and has been documented across multiple timestamped platforms including Google Keep, Google Gemini, Anthropic Claude, and DeepSeek. This standardized reference version is filed for the purpose of establishing priority of invention.

Translations and cultural adaptations are especially welcome. If you adapt this document for your language or community, please share it.

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